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7   What do Participants Perceive as the Attributes of a Good Adventure Sports Coach?

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24   **Abstract**

25   This paper presents a mixed-method investigation of client's perceptions of a good

26   adventure sports coach. Semi-structured interviews were analysed thematically, and

27   the findings used to inform a subsequent larger survey that sought to verify the

28   importance of the themes identified in the interviews. The findings draw an alignment

29   between the attributes of good coaches in traditional sports, as reported in previous

30   studies, and those of adventure sports coaches. However, they also identify three

31   additional attributes that are critical for good adventure sports coaches: (1) in-depth

32   knowledge of the adventure sports environment, (2) a very high degree of

33   individualisation, and (3) an explicit focus on developing the participant's confidence.

34   The implications for training adventure sports coaches are discussed.

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36   Keywords: adventure sports coaching, coach's attributes, coach's knowledge,

37   individualisation, self-efficacy

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41   Adventure sports are growing in popularity (O'Keefe, 2019), consequently there has

42   been an increase interest in understanding coaching practice in this domain. However, much

43   of the research investigating adventure sports coaching has relied upon the self-reporting of

44   highly experienced and qualified coaches (e.g., Christian, Berry, & Kearney, 2017; Collins &

45   Collins, 2015; Collins, Carson, & Collins, 2016). Similarly, Becker (2009) reports that the

46   majority of coaching research explores the effectiveness of coaching rather than the

47   characteristics of the coach themselves. Becker reports six dimensions of great coaching;

48   coach attributes, the environment, relationships, the system, coaching actions, and influences.

49   And states 'Great coaches [are not only coaches], but extraordinary people who left lasting

50   impressions on the lives' on those they coach (p. 112). Reflecting the potential impact of

51   coaches and the impact of adventurous environments on individuals (Mackenzie & Brymer,

52   2018), it seems sensible to extent Becker's investigation into adventure sports coaching.

53   Additionally, to understand adventure sports coaching practice from a different perspective,

54   we previously investigated what participants sought from their coaching experience

55   (Eastabrook & Collins, 2019) and reported that participants were unable to separate coaches'

56   attributes from the coaching process. Consequently, there are three aspects of this this study;

57   (1) reflecting on the participants' lack of perceived separation, it seems logical to further

58   investigate what good coaching is in the adventure domain, (2) to continue our original line

59   of investigation into adventure sport coaching from the perspective of participants rather than

60   coach and, (3) to extend and narrow the remit of Becker's investigation into adventure sports

61   coaching. We expand our earlier study to ask a group of adventure sport coaching

62   participants, What are the attributes of a good adventure sports coach? With the aim to

63   inform and improve adventure sports coach training and education. We first explore the

64   attributes of good coaches in both traditional and adventure sports as reported in previous

65   studies.

Review of existing literature

67   Many authors (e.g., Becker, 2009; Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Côté & Gilbert,

68   2009; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Light & Evans, 2013; Nash, Martindale, Collins, &

69   Martindale, 2012; Weiss, Barber, Sisley, & Ebbeck, 1991) have discussed the characteristics

70   of good coaches and offered numerous perspectives of what constitutes good coaches in a

71   range of sports. Commonly, these characteristics include having excellent subject knowledge

72   and interpersonal, pedagogic, leadership, and management skills.

Coaches' knowledge

74   Côté, Saimela, Trudel, Baria, and Russell (1995) have highlighted the value placed on

75   declarative knowledge by a group of expert gymnastic coaches. This contrasts with Saury and

76   Durand (1998), who suggest that an experienced coach has access to implicit knowledge as

77   'professional know-how' (p. 264). As Sinfield, Allen, and Collins (2019) recognise, the

78   reality entails a synergy of both declarative and implicit knowledge to achieve the adaptive

79   coaching required in the adventure context. This aligns with the findings of Collins and

80   Collins (2016a, 2016b) and Tozer, Fazey, and Fazey (2007) regarding adaptive requirements.

81   Both sets of authors describe adaptability and flexibility as key attributes of high-level

82   adventure sports coaches, and suggest this is a response to the situational demands created by

83   a hyper-dynamic coaching environment and the complexity of the individual being coached

84   (Collins & Collins, 2015; Collins & Collins, 2016a). Fluid notions of knowledge and

85   expertise seem to be integral to the practices of the coach in adventure sports. Collins,

86   Collins, & Carson (2016) exemplify this as 'knowledge made usable and reliable in context

87   by it becoming tacit following a period of reflection on extensive experience' (p. 5). Indeed,

88   knowledge gathered from experience via reflection is critical in this regard and is logically

89   developed through interaction with clients, understanding their developmental needs and

90   wants, and a close rapport with them.

91   The high value of knowledge constructed from reflection on experience may, in part,

92   explain why coaches have been found to see little value in formal coach education as reported

93   by Nelson, Cushion, and Potrac (2006). Similarly Sinfield et al. (2019) argue that more

94   experienced coaches may actually benefit from formalised education because their

95   experience brings context to their training. Therefore, and in agreement with Stoszkowski

96   and Collins (2012), it seems necessary to include the reflective skills needed to make sense of

97   lived experiences in coach education. Such approaches clearly help to create the 'lifelong

98   learners committed to personal growth' (p. 221) highlighted by Côté (2006) as a key attribute

99   of effective coaches. Lifelong learning within the adventure coaching sector aligns with the

100   sophisticated epistemological position high-level adventure sport coaches hold (Christian,

101   Hodgson, Berry, & Kearney, 2019, Collins & Collins, 2016a). This sophisticated position

102   adds a depth and complexity to the adventure sport coaches knowledge.

103   ***Coaches' interpersonal skills***

104   At the heart of the coach–athlete relationship are coaches' interpersonal skills.

105   Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, and Carbonneau (2011) describe the relationship between

106   coaches and athletes as one marked by interdependence. In practical terms and particularly

107   pertinent is this interdependence in adventure sports, adventure sports coaches and clients

108   undertake the activity together (Collins & Collins, 2012). Coaching poses an inherent

109   challenge for the coach, who must manage the process with, and for the participant (Buckley,

110   2012; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016). Coaches must consider, for example, the difficulty of a

111   task (e.g., chosen climbing route), the influence of the environment (e.g., sea state), or

112   psychosocial factors (e.g., peer pressure) on the participant while measuring the effectiveness

113   of the coaching relationship. This interdependence requires a two-way flow of information

114   and trust, whereby coaches set appropriate goals for clients and support them to achieve those

115   goals. Mageau and Vallerand (2003) have termed such behaviour as autonomy supportive.

116   Additionally, the social aspect of adventure sports is recognised as important by Kerr

117   and Mackenzie (2012) and Mackenzie and Brymer (2018). The coach accompanies the client

118   on the adventure, a friendly demeanour and rapport with the client in challenging situations

119   project a positive attitude toward goal achievement (Ianiro, Lehmann-Willenbrock, &

120   Kauffeld, 2015). Likewise, Gray and Collins (2016) report the interpersonal strategies used

121   by adventure sports coaches, including intuitive social engagement, though they suggest this

122   is not used at a strategic level. In team sports, Gearity (2012) reports how interpersonal skills

123   and social engagement can be used to create a positive coaching environment, highlighting a

124   link to the coach's teaching ability.

125   *Coaches' teaching and pedagogical skills*

126   Gearity (2012) states that coaches should be 'knowledgeable of the technical, tactical,

127   and mental skills of their sport and also how to facilitate athletes' learning' (p. 91), namely a

128   declarative knowledge of the activity and also the pedagogic and andragogic skills required to

129   facilitate development. Particularly within adventure sports coaching, coaches face the

130   complexities of individual motivations and hyper-dynamic environmental pressures (Collins

131   & Collins, 2016a). Adventure sports coaches have developed multiple approaches to facilitate

132   effective learning in a variety of contexts (Collins et al., 2016), which may be illustrative of

133   the sophisticated epistemological position (Schommer, 1994) that has been identified in high-

134   level adventure sports coaches (Christian et al., 2017). This sophistication is reflected in the

135   ability to utilise different approaches rather than a fixed didactic approach.

136   Closely linked with this possible epistemological stance is the stated aim of high-level

137   adventure sports coaches to individualise the coaching process (Christian et al., 2017; Collins

138   et al., 2015). However, it remains unclear what is being individualised. For instance,

139   adventure sports coaches are expected to make decisions on the teaching approach as well as

140   the technical skills to be taught in response to students' learning needs (Collins & Collins,

141   2016b). A focus on the students' learning needs is, potentially, in contrast to that of

142   traditional sports coaching. Bloom, Crumpton, & Anderson (1999) identified that expert

143   basketball coaches spent 60% of their time teaching the technical and tactical aspects of their

144   game. This difference in focus may reflect the stated aims of adventure sports coaches to

145   develop fully independent performance in their adventure sports students.

146   *Management and leadership skills*

147   The importance of management and leadership for sports coaches is highlighted by

148   Sage (1973), who suggests that the two are synonymous in this context. While athletes look

149   to each other for social trends and team goals, they seek advice from their coaches for

150   leadership and management relating to physical ability and goal attainment (Price & Weiss,

151   2013). Both Price and Weiss (2013) and Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2012) propose

152   transformational leadership as a structure for achieving good leadership because it fosters

153   confidence and character development. More contextually, however, McElligott (2015)

154   reports the use of both rewards for meeting specific goals, i.e. rest day after summit, and

155   developing their intrinsic motivation to reach the summit. These two approaches are

156   characterised by McElligott as transactional and transformational leadership, hinting at the

157   sophisticated epistemology identified earlier with regard to approach.

158   *Perceptions of adventure sports coaching recipients*

159   The reasons participants seek coaching in adventure sports are important. The

160   motivations to participate in adventure sports are multifaceted (Kerr & Mackenzie, 2012) and

161   complex (Collins & Brymer, 2018), and consequently the perceptions of good coaching may

162   also differ, such as those reported by Ojala and Thorpe (2015) in Finnish snowboarders.

163   More fundamentally, however, Black and Weiss (1992) suggest there is a potential inherent

164   flaw in investigating client or athlete perspectives. Coaches who are perceived by athletes to

165   give more information and praise following desirable performances scored higher on the

166   measures of perceived success and competence. This may challenge the adventure sports

167   coach who may use bandwidth feedbacking, for instance, in order to develop independence

168   and lifelong learning in a participant. Such approaches may not be considered as good by the

169   participant but do reflect the coach's epistemological position. The potential epistemology

170   misalignment could lead to miscomprehension for both coach and client where the participant

171   perceive they are receiving poor coaching but might actually be taught towards a different

172   motivation for participation.

173   Consequently, understanding what participants perceive as good coaching would

174   appear critical if adventure sports coaches are to be perceived as competent, professional,

175   effective, and offering value for money.

176   **Methodology**

177   A two-part (qualitative and quantitative) mixed-method approach (Robson, 2011) was

178   adopted. Part 1 was a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with a small sample

179   size (n = 15), which was then used to inform Part 2, a web-based descriptive design survey

180   (Dunlock, 1993) with a larger sample size (n = 202).

181   *Part 1: Qualitative phase*

182   *Authors*

183   The primary author conducted all the following data collection and analysis. They are

184   a high-level adventure sports coach with ten years' experience working across the UK and

185   Europe. The second author is a highly experienced adventure sport coach with over thirty

186   years of experience coaching in the UK and Europe. Both authors take a pragmatic and

187   subjective epistemological position, one that acknowledges multiple interpretation of reality

188   rather than a grand single theory as such we seek a probable truth rather than generalizable

189   findings.

190   *Participants*

191   The study participants were recruited in a stratified random representative sample (n =

192   15) against the following criteria: (1) being an adventure sport participant, (2) undertaking a

193   five-day coached adventure sports programme, and (3) openness and willingness to engage in

194   the research. The sample was representative and reflected gender and age (female n = 6, male

195   n = 9, mean age = 43), and predominantly activities (mountaineering and rock climbing; n =

196   11 and canoeing and kayaking; n = 4).

197   *Data collection*

198   Participants were invited to consider their participation at the start of their coaching

199   programme and were provided with an information sheet. Following agreed consent, semi-

200   structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in a comfortable and convenient location at

201   the end of the programme or via Skype (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014) within five days of the

202   programme end. Interviews were conducted over the autumn, winter, and spring of 2017–18.

203   The interviews adopted an informal approach following the interview guide found in Table 1

204   and aimed to expose unanticipated themes and develop a better understanding of the

205   responses to the questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2006). Participants were asked to recall

206   their recent coaching experience and encouraged to articulate the characteristics of the

207   particular coach who facilitated that experience. Interviews notes were made during the

208   recording in the form of bracketing (Ahern, 1999), and keep for consideration during later

209   analysis. All interviews were recorded digitally for transcription. This structure was

210   cognitively piloted before use with a smaller representative sample (n = 2) with 2 adjustments

211   made to the structure and 11 changes to language made prior to use (Drennan, 2003).

212   *Insert table 1 close to this point.*

213   *Analysis*

214   Interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy by checking against

215   the digital recording (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The

216   transcripts were then 'codified while listening to the original recording' (J. A. Smith, Larkin,

217   & Flowers, 2009, p. 82) and a thematic analysis was subsequently conducted (Fereday &

218   Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Initial coding of responses was conducted in three cycles to gain

219   saturation from different perspectives, before grouping into low-order themes. Once

220   convergence was found, the process was repeated to gain mid-order themes. This procedure

221   allowed the data to be compared with existing concepts while remaining open to the

222   recognition and comprehension of new themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The significance of

223   themes was not solely attributed to frequency but also to the emphasis derived from

224   annotations taken during the interview.

225   **Part 2: Quantitative phase**

226   Following the interviews, a survey was conducted to assess the views of a larger

227   sample who had received adventure sports coaching. The aim was to improve the reliability

228   of the findings from Part 1. Zohrabi (2016) suggested researchers 'should try to involve most

229   participants in all phases of inquiry' (p. 259) to utilise the benefits of member checking

230   (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). The use of member checking in this matter reflects the concerns of

231   Smith and McGannon (2018) and has the aim of seeking confirmation from the same

232   population rather than the individual interviewee. The subsequent question was 'How

233   important are the attributes identified in Part 1 to a broader population?'

234   *Participants*

235   A convenient, self-selecting sample was utilised with the same criteria as Part 1.

236   Respondents were asked to complete an online survey over the summer of 2018. The link

237   was shared across eight outdoor sport communities on social media, for example, Rock

238   Climbers UK and 'Slightly' White Water Kayaking. This resulted in a total of 250 responses,

239   of which 202 were considered acceptable. Incomplete surveys were rejected, with a

240   completion rate of 81%. The self-selecting nature of this sample differed from the

241   demographics in Part 1, with female participants (n = 78, 38%) sampling higher and water-

242   based activities (n = 134, 66%) dominant.

243   *Data collection*

244   The two high-order themes identified in Part 1 informed the questions in the survey

245   design. The mid-order themes acted as the focus for the sub-questions, and alterations to

246   language were made to improve accessibility and understanding. A point allocation method

247   was used as described by Doyle, Green and Bottomley (1997), where respondents were asked

248   to weigh the importance of each mid-order theme by dividing 100 points between all the mid-

249   order themes (respondents had to use all 100 points). For example, a question with three sub-

250   questions could be 98, one, and one, or 33, 33, and 34, depending on the respondent's feeling.

251   This allocation of points had two advantages. Firstly, it encouraged the respondents to

252   consider the mid-order themes carefully, addressing survey fatigue (Sinickas, 2007) by

253   utilising an alternative to the commonly used Likert scales. Secondly, Part 2 aimed to

254   understand the *relative* importance of the mid-order themes to inform the comprehension of

255   the high-order themes. Doyle et al. discuss the advantages of ranking and points allocation

256   and, although Doyle et al. report ranking as preferred by users because it required less

257   cognitive effort, this is the reason points allocation was used here: to make the respondents

258   think. A cognitive pilot was also applied to a representative sample (n = 6) (Drennan, 2003)

259   and the language refined as a result. An incentive in the form of a chance to win a shopping

260   voucher was offered for completing the survey with the winner being randomly selected.

261   *Analysis*

262   A simple descriptive statistical analysis was applied to show the mean, standard

263   deviation, and skew for each question.

264   **Results and discussion**

265   ***Part 1***

266   The thematic analysis of the transcripts found 243 codified units. These were

267   subsequently grouped into ten mid-order themes and two high-order themes, as shown in

268   Table 2. The two high-order themes are coaching behaviours and the capacity to adapt.

269   *Insert table 2 close to this point.*

270   ***Part 2***

271   The descriptive analysis of the survey is reported in Table 3. This survey identified

272   the relative importance of each mid-order theme within each high-order theme. To give the

273   results the most meaning, the two parts have been integrated within the discussion to give

274   each mid-order theme a sense of relative importance within the two high-order themes.

275   *Insert table 3 close to this point.*

276   ***Coaching behaviour***

277   The participants reported that they utilised the coaches as sources of confidence.

278   Gemma spoke about 'feeling that the coach gives you the confidence to explore', referring to

279   the exploration of new experiences as well as her abilities. This attribute of coaching

280   behaviour is the most prominent, with 141 respondents in Part 2 giving it the highest value

281   (m = 24.9). The coaches' role in supporting the development of their clients' confidence took

282   three forms – verbal reassurance, personal accomplishments, and vicarious experiences – and

283   possibly reflects the risks associated with adventure sports participation. Bandura's (1977)

284   work on self-efficacy supports the existence of these roles, noting that personal

285   accomplishments are a stronger source of information, while vicarious experiences are less

286   dependable. Alfie recalled a mountaineering experience and said that 'having reached the

287   summit by the North Ridge is good for [my] confidence', because his personal goal had been

288   achieved. Dorothy reported that her coach 'is here telling us it's fine', giving a clear example

289   of verbal reassurance. Reuben highlighted the value of vicarious experiences and stated that

290   the coaches 'recounted their own tales…that no matter what you are trying to do, you feel

291   that they have done it before'. Dorothy gained her confidence through reassurance, Alfie via

292   his accomplishments, and Reuben by engaging with his coach's prior experiences. Thus, each

293   client seemed to be able to source the information and confidence-building support they

294   needed from their coach.

295   The participants valued interpersonal skills highly, in common with perceptions of

296   good coaching found outside the ambit of adventure sports (Becker, 2009; Black & Weiss,

297   1992; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003; Curran, Hill, Hall, & Jowett, 2015). Sixty-nine respondents

298   ranked this aspect of coaching behaviour as the most important (m = 23.5). Rachael

299   highlighted the link between rapport and trust in the coaches' judgement and stated that a

300   'good relationship or rapport with the instructor [coach] is vital because you got to be able to

301   trust their judgement'. Pearce linked rapport with his learning and explained that 'rapport is

302   so important for the development of skills', while Griff said that the coaches are 'making sure

303   everyone is getting what they want from the course'. Griff highlighted the relationship

304   between rapport and achieving the client's goals and their desired coaching experience

305   (Eastabrook & Collins, 2019). The coaches appear to be strategically using their rapport with

306   their clients in a more sophisticated manner than previously reported by Gray and Collins

307   (2016)

308   Participants in this study valued high levels of enthusiasm in their coaches, and it was

309   the third-ranked aspect of coaching behaviour (m = 20.4) in Part 2. Dennis broadly asserted

310   that his coach had 'got a really positive outlook on life coming through'. More specifically,

311   Kristian linked the coaches' enthusiasm to their coaching practice, stating that such

312   'enthusiasm for coaching was infectious', while Gemma declared that her coach 'loves being

313   outside'. This highlights that coaches were enthusiastic about their coaching and the given

314   adventure activity, demonstrating commitment and emotional investment in their clients'

315   development. Such attitudes affect both goal setting and client support in adventurous

316   contexts.

317   The coach's credibility as a coach and also a respected practitioner of adventure

318   sports appears to be a unique aspect of adventure sports coaching practice, as this was not

319   reported in the literature of traditional sports coaching. While this aspect was implicit in

320   Collins and Collins' findings (2012, 2016a), it was explicit in this study and was ranked

321   fourth by the respondents in Part 2 (m = 15.8). Alfie would only receive coaching from

322   someone if 'they have credibility' in *his* terms. While credibility is desirable, it is unclear

323   what makes a coach credible to clients, and thus, how it could be enhanced. Consequently,

324   this is an area that requires further investigation.

325   Linked closely to credibility is the coaches' capacity to inspire participants. Tommy,

326   for example, stated that 'a highly qualified coach can inspire you to continue learning'. The

327   coaches' ability to be inspirational was ranked fifth (m = 15.5) by the respondents. There are

328   two aspects to being inspired in this context. Firstly, the client is inspired by the coach's

329   performance, both as a coach and as a performer, a unique aspect of adventure sports coaches

330   (Collins & Collins, 2012). The clients want their coach to genuinely enjoy their job as this

331   enhances the coaching experience for the client (Eastabrook and Collins, 2019). The second

332   is routed in the developmental goals of the coaching. Inspired clients may be more likely to

333   practice and thus to continue their development independently.

334   ***Capacity to adapt***

335   The coaches' capacity to individualise the whole coaching experience was a key

336   factor in the perception of good coaching by the participants in this study. Individualisation

337   was ranked highest by 168 respondents in Part 2 (m = 24.5). Individualisation in this context

338   was multifaceted and extended beyond the teaching of individual aspects of a sport, as

339   reported by Ives (2008). For example, Dorothy highlighted the coaches' ability to identify the

340   correct starting point of the coaching process via observation and questioning and stated that

341   'the coaches are so great at building on where you are as an individual'. Alfie said that his

342   coach was able to give him 'space to work it out, so I'm not just remembering something

343   they've said, I'm actually understanding'. This latter point from Alfie highlights his desire for

344   the coach to align their teaching with how Alfie wants to learn at that point. Jack linked

345   individualisation to risk tolerance, stating that '[I] achieved something I wouldn't have done

346   if he [the coach] hadn't been there', thus linking individualisation back to the development of

347   confidence highlighted earlier. Jack would not otherwise have attempted the activity because

348   of his perception of the involved risk and level of challenge that creates. Additionally and

349   uniquely, individualisation was extended to the participants' conceptualisation of adventure

350   (see Mackenzie & Brymer, 2018) by the coaches. Dennis explained that the coaching he

351   received allowed him to no longer be 'at the behest of other people's plans', giving him the

352   freedom to make his own decisions regarding his own participation and adventurous

353   experiences.

354   Jack 'wanted to be imparted knowledge by someone who has been there, done it and

355   knows what they are on about'. The coaches' depth of knowledge was clearly linked with

356   credibility, as cited earlier, and it was ranked as the second most important factor in Part 2 (m

357   = 23.5). Such a desire is common in cases of good coaching within other sports, as identified

358   by multiple authors (Côté et al., 1995; Light & Evans, 2013; Nelson et al., 2006). Two

359   additional aspects of the adventure sport coaches' knowledge could be identified: (1) the

360   desire for more knowledge stems from a desire to be independent of coaches, and (2) the

361   coaches are expected to have knowledge of the hyper-dynamic context of their coaching.

362   Tommy exemplified the former: 'when you are doing that on your own, you have to dig from

363   your own experience and knowledge base in order to make that decision'. Moreover, Kristian

364   noted that a good coach has 'been there and can take you to interesting places'. Lori

365   highlighted that participations expect the coaches to have knowledge regarding the

366   environment and coaching, building on their own experiences. This echoes the assertions of

367   Collins et al. (2016), that a coach's knowledge gathered from experience and reflection is

368   critical.

369   The coaches' ability to observe and analyse was ranked third within the high-order

370   theme (m = 19.9) and was an integral aspect of the individualisation of the coaching process.

371   Alfie expected his coach to observe with 'a critical eye and analyse what you are doing and

372   be able to pick up what you are doing wrong'. The participants wanted their coach to act as a

373   critical friend. This highlights the need for coach and client to be in alignment with regard to

374   the client's long-term goals.

375   Participants valued coaches with a broad range of coaching strategies, ranking this

376   aspect as fourth in Part 2 (m = 17.3). Dennis appreciated his coach as he 'explained

377   something in multiple different ways' and stated? the rest of the group also valued this.

378   Meanwhile, Alfie noted that his coach was able to offer a more difficult route up to the

379   summit that was their goal 'rather than picking an easier route' for the whole group. Clearly,

380   in this case the coach sought to employ several practical strategies to achieve the same goal

381   while also maintaining client security, demonstrating highly individualised and sophisticated

382   judgement.

383   Dennis expected his coach to find out 'what are his aspirations, what can he do, [then]

384   modify the course' to suit him, and a flexible programme was ranked fifth in terms of

385   importance by the respondents in Part 2 (m = 17.1). Indeed, flexibility is required both on the

386   part of coaches and their employers/organisations. To meet the aspirations of participants,

387   coaches need to be adaptable within a flexible infrastructure. Additional resources such as

388   transport, extra coaches, or indoor facilities may also be required to this end. However,

389   highly qualified coaches and logistical support for the desired flexibility may have cost-

390   related implications for coaches and their employers, and such options may not always be

391   feasible during a single-course programme.

392   ***Attributes of a good adventure sports coach***

393   Participants in this study valued the coaches' ability to enhance the coaching

394   experience (Eastabrook & Collins, 2019) by utilising a range of nuanced behaviours. The

395   respondents had an expectation of a thorough coaching process distinct from a guided or led

396   experience. People seeking coaching in any sport want their coaches to have the capacity to

397   adapt in response to their learning needs and the environmental demands. However, the high-

398   order themes indicate that three aspects specifically characterise good adventure sports

399   coaches: knowledge of the environment, the extent and nature of individualisation, and the

400   coach's ability to act as a source of confidence. These aspects extend beyond the descriptors

401   for good coaching in other sports and given the importance placed on these attributes by the

402   participant mean that these could be considered unique to adventure sports coaching.

403   *Knowledge of the adventure environment*

404   It seems critical that coaches possess in-depth knowledge of the adventure sports

405   coaching environment. There are three aspects to the coaching environment. The coaches

406   need to understand the practicalities of coaching in adventurous environments, including

407   where to go, the impact of the weather and its impact (see Aadland, Vikene, Varley and Moe

408   (2017) as an example). Coaches need to be sensitive to the social and cultural environment

409   that is desired by participants of adventure (see Lorimer and Holland-Smith (2012) as an

410   example). This goes beyond merely understanding the dynamic environment as an adventure

411   sport participant and includes how the environment interacts with a task and the individual.

412   The participants expect this knowledge to stem from a coach's extensive experience of the

413   activity and environment. This environmental knowledge extends beyond simple situation

414   awareness as described by Endsley (1997) into the comprehension of the factors causing the

415   situation and an ability to project its implications on the students' learning, however specific

416   research into this is required to more fully understand this aspect of the adventure sport

417   coaches knowledge.

418   *Expansive individualisation of the coaching and adventure experience*

419   The notion of individualisation in adventure sports extends beyond the teaching of

420   technical skills and encompasses the client's perception of good teaching. This involves

421   being able to coach in a way that aligns with clients' perceptions of good teaching to gain

422   their trust and build rapport before exploring more sophisticated approaches to improving

423   their performance. Closely linked to this is the coaches' tolerance of risk, which allows them

424   to manage the risk-versus-benefit decisions lying at the heart of coaching in this sector

425   (Collins & Collins, 2013) by comprehending the concomitant potential benefits to students'

426   and clients' conceptualisation of participation: specifically, how they want to participate. The

427   latter aspect might include, for example, whether clients are more interested in developing

428   their technical abilities to deal with more challenging environments or in reaching a technical

429   level that satisfies their desired engagement with the wilderness (Eastabrook & Collins,

430   2019).

431   *An explicit development of confidence*

432   Participants expect coaches to act as a source of confidence, with an appropriate level

433   of challenge is required for the activity to feel authentic enough to achieve goal

434   accomplishment. This level must be judged carefully by the coach, similar to the risk-versus-

435   benefit decision cited above. The participants in this study reported their coaches' use verbal

436   reassurance in their abilities, vicarious experiences lived via the coach, and the coaches'

437   personal accomplishments are helpful for achieving their goals and aspirations. These

438   strategies develop self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

439   **Limitations and future research**

440   As reported by Weiss et al. (1991), there is an inherent issue with clients' perceptions

441   of good coaching: namely, coaches who say nice things to participants might make them feel

442   good, but that is not necessarily good coaching. Similarly, 'good' coaching is a subjective

443   term. This subjectivity raises the question of whether what is perceived as good coaching

444   within a commercial setting, i.e., happy, repeat clients, is the same as what is perceived as

445   good coaching in a developmental context. Both contexts are valuable but are not separated

446   in this study, thereby presenting the contentious issue of commodification in adventure sports

447   (see Beedie & Hudson, 2003; Loynes, 1998; Varley, 2006). The commodification of

448   adventure sports opens a further line of enquiry to understand how commodification affects

449   coaching practice. Additionally, these findings only reflect a sample of British people's

450   perception of good coaching. Therefore, to further understand the perceived attributes of

451   good adventure sports coaches, it seems logical to extend the study size and location. It is a

452   further point of inquiry as it is not clear how coaches develop these attributes, as they do not

453   appear to be aspects of national governing adventure sports coach education. If national

454   governing bodies recognise the need for the attributes detailed in this study, then it seems

455   logical that a further study may be required to determine how these can be developed in

456   novice coaches.

457   **Conclusion**

458   The findings demonstrate that many of the participants' perceptions of good coaching

459   are common to both adventure and traditional sports. However, importantly this study also

460   provides evidence for three key attributes that are particularly critical for and pertinent to

461   adventure sport coaches: (1) a rich and in-depth knowledge of the dynamic coaching

462   environment and how it interacts with the individual; (2) an explicit, highly individualised

463   approach that includes clients' conceptualisation of their participation in adventure sports;

464   and (3) an ability to act on and develop participants' confidence. These perceptions present

465   challenges for the adventure sport coach. Clearly the coach must fully comprehend the

466   learners' needs and motivations. To meet them, be able to employ a range of technical and

467   teaching strategies, and significantly, to have a full understanding of the adventurous setting.

468   These findings offer a different perspective on adventure sport coaching and the way in

469   which coaches might be trained and evaluated. Specifically, measuring coaching beyond the

470   measurement of performance in a traditional sense. Which in turn does demonstrate a need

471   for further research regarding performance in adventure sports. Furthermore, these findings

472   strengthen the need for further research to investigate how adventure sport coaching

473   knowledge, adventure sport individualisation and confidence is developed for future explicit

474   inclusion in coach education and development.

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670

671

672   Table 1

673   *Semi-structured interview guide sheet*

Initial Question	Secondary Question	Prompts
Administration		
	Questions	
	Signed consent	
	Remind interviewee they are free to withdraw at any time	
Can you tell me about your most recent coaching session?		
	Where did it take place?	Location
	Who was it with?	Duration
	What was the best part?	Commercial operator
What did you expect from the overall experience?		
	Any learning objectives?	TTPP
	Experiencing any specific issues?	Enjoyment
		Culture of adventure
	New challenge or environments?	
How did the coach meet your expectations?		
	How friendly was the coach or their warmth of welcome?	Quality of resources
		Teaching ability
	Was there a personalised plan for the course?	The technical ability of the coach
	What activities did you undertake?	
How important was it that the coach took you on a *real* adventure?		
	Where did the coaching take place?	Challenge

	Did you feel comfortable in the places you went to?	Learning opportunities
	Do you feel more able to re-visit those places post-coaching?	Self-belief
		Self-efficacy
		Adventure
What did the coach do to aid your long-term learning aspirations?	Do you have a specific action plan to follow?	Independence
		Self-directed learning
	What do you still need to practice?	Environments
		Challenges
	What adventures can you now have?	Venues
		Community of practice

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676   Table 2

677   *Thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews*

High-Order Themes (2)	Mid-Order Themes (10)
Coaching behaviour	Coach is the source of confidence
	Interpersonal skills
	Coach's enthusiasm
	Coach was inspirational
	Coach has high credibility
Capacity to adapt	Individualised approach
	Adaptive course programme
	Observation and analysis
	Coach's depth of knowledge
	Range of coaching strategies

678

679

680 Table 3

681 *Descriptive data analysis of the survey, displaying relative importance of mid-order themes*

High-Order Theme	Mid-Order Theme	Mean	SD	Skew
Coaching behaviour	Coach is the source of confidence	24.9	11.2	0.7
	Interpersonal skills	23.5	10.3	1.8
	Coach's enthusiasm	20.4	7.2	0.6
	Coach has high credibility	15.8	8.9	0.6
	Coach is inspirational	15.5	7.9	0.7
Capacity to adapt	Individualised approach	24.5	9.9	1.3
	Coach's depth of knowledge	21.2	9.7	1.9
	Observation and analysis	19.9	7.6	0.7
	Range of coaching strategies	17.3	7.2	-0.4
	Adaptive course programme	17.1	7.3	0.2

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